

Professional Choices... continued

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waiting for. Voc Rehab in South Dakota was looking for a counselor to join their team.

He was granted an interview and again Voc Rehab provided the services he needed. They gave him some tips and assisted with finding professional clothing.

The interview went well. A short time later Chad accepted the position. He was thrilled.

In preparing for his move, Voc Rehab aided Chad in his search for an apartment. After he found an accessible, comfortable place to live, they helped to offset the financial burden of moving and settling in.

Chad started work at Vocational Rehabilitation in Mitchell, South Dakota in November of 2003.

He continues to keep in touch with Lisa. She has great things to say about Chad, mentioning his wonderful personality and open-mindedness lend themselves to his career. "Chad's a really nice guy," she summed up.

To Voc Rehab, Chad says, "Thanks for everything!" He enjoyed his experiences with them commenting, "You learn so much."

Through hard work and a bright outlook, he achieved those first goals he made. His career is with Voc Rehab and he is helping others. Chad credits many with his success but said in the end, "It's all about your attitude." □

Quality Employment Solutions® is an official publication provided by Vocational Rehabilitation, Nebraska Department of Education. It is published to exchange information on rehabilitation services and topics of mutual interest to Nebraskans involved in working with people with disabilities.

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Nebraska Department of Education

Issue 55

Professional Choices

Crofton man becomes rehab counselor

"I'm a glass is half full kind of guy," said Chad Kollars. That optimism has pulled him through on more than one occasion, including the life altering car accident he was involved in just after high school. He was told that he would need to use a wheelchair. Chad soon learned some new terms related to his condition-paraplegia.

After adjusting to his new lifestyle, he needed to make some decisions about his future. "I just knew I wanted to help people..." Chad recalled. He didn't know quite where to turn until his uncle suggested he contact an employment agency for individuals with disabilities called Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab).

Chad lived in Crofton, Nebraska but discovered a Voc Rehab office located nearby in Norfolk. He met with Mary Balaski to talk about Voc Rehab's services and determine whether or not he was interested. He also worked with counselor Lisa Mitchell to fulfill his ambitions.

Chad was excited about working with the program. Even at that early stage, he was making some goals. "I knew I

wanted to get a job with Voc Rehab as soon as I found out what Voc Rehab does," he commented.

First, there were interest and skill evaluations. After some discussion, and a lot of thought, Chad made the decision to continue his education.

He enrolled at Wayne State College. Voc Rehab helped to make his education possible, offering assistance when he needed it. Chad was pleased, but it wasn't long before he ran into a problem.

The bathrooms at the school were not wheelchair accessible. Chad went to Voc Rehab with this dilemma, hoping they could help. Voc Rehab advocated for Chad. They brought the problem to the attention of the necessary people, and the school remedied the situation.

Chad's major was in human service counseling. Toward the end of his school experience, Lisa Mitchell worked with the college to coordinate Chad's internship. He decided to do it at Voc Rehab. "I loved it," he remarked of the experience.

At this time, they were also helping Chad to prepare his resume and search for jobs. Searching with the Internet, Chad found the job he'd been

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Realizing Goals in Real Estate

Bellevue woman utilizes Voc Rehab services

“...I was only 15,” Angie Smith recalls. She is referring to the high school basketball game that left her with a slipped disc in her lower back.

This limits her sitting or standing for long periods of time, and from lifting heavy objects.

Despite some limitations, Angie is optimistic. She mentioned feeling lucky because she’s been told that the pain could be much worse than it is.

Angie was still having some trouble when she was a senior in high school. She needed to prepare for college and a career.

She decided to look into Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab) for assistance with planning for her future.

Her brother had previously been involved with the program, and though they weren’t sure it would be right for Angie, she decided, “Well heck, let’s give it a try!”

She met with Kathy Clements at the Vocational Rehabilitation office in O’Neill (Kathy is currently working out of Norfolk) and talked about the best plan of action.

“I filled out a whole bunch of different paperwork to figure out what I was good at, what I liked to do, what I could do...” Angie commented. “We narrowed it down to a good field of study for me.”

Angie made the decision to attend Metro Community College with the help of Vocational Rehabilitation.

“I just got my two year Associate Degree,” she said. Angie pursued the Administrative Assistant program.

Just two months after her graduation in March of 2003, Angie found a job with Commercial Realty in Omaha. She is the Administrative/Executive Assistant, and the job keeps her busy.

Angie is responsible for the advertising for their available properties. She creates promotional flyers,

“It was just really nice to know that no matter what I was going through at that time, Kathy was just a phone call away...”



Angie Smith

billboard signs, and is responsible for accounts receivable/payable.

“I do a little bit of everything there... Commercial Realty owns a lot of property in Omaha and also in surrounding states.” This growing company needed someone with Angie’s special skills.

All throughout this process the Vocational Rehabilitation team has been there when Angie needed them. She is complimentary and extremely appreciative, especially of Kathy.

“She called periodically just to check on me. She was always there if ever I needed anything... She’s a wonderful, wonderful person,” Angie said.

“She was really personable and always wanting to do anything she could to help. It was just really nice to know that no matter what I was going through at that time, Kathy was just a phone call away...”

Vocational Rehabilitation has equally wonderful things to say about Angie. One counselor that followed up with Angie, Ruth Markhofer, put her in such a positive light.

“She’s just a delightful young woman...” Ruth remarked, “Always very upbeat, very positive.”

Ruth also felt that Angie was extremely competent. “She just really pushed herself.” She said that Angie “...showed a lot of initiative.” This quality will serve her well in her current and long-range goals.

Angie’s upbeat personality and motivation are clear when she talks about her job and life.

Her future is bright and she plans to continue at Commercial Realty and advance her position there as much as possible.

Angie has had a wonderful experience working with Voc Rehab and continues to keep in touch. She has worked extremely hard, and as a result has overcome the barriers to her success. □

Working with Wal-Mart

Omaha agencies working together results in success

“It’s been a long, long road,” said Robert Fargher’s mother, Ruth Capp. She views the last few months as a culmination of all of the hard work her family and different agencies have put into finding Robert that perfect job. “It’s been a learning experience for him all along the way.”

Finding a job required the help of agencies like Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab). When Robert finished high school in 1987 he contacted them to see what kinds of services they could offer. He worked with counselors at Voc Rehab and sampled the job markets in other locations.

Ultimately, he returned to Voc Rehab in Omaha and began working with Anissa Wilson Jenkins. They created some goals for Robert and talked about the best ways to achieve them.

He and Anissa decided to focus on finding him a long-term position. His previous positions were generally short lived, and he wanted some stability. “My goal is longevity,” Robert stated.

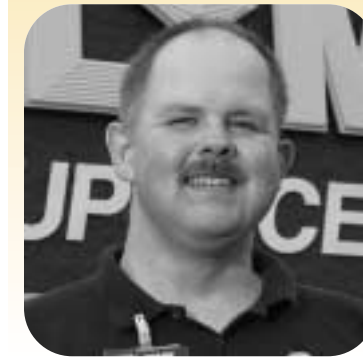
There were a few barriers. Robert is always learning to be more independent, however, he is affected by a learning disability that makes it difficult for him to grasp certain things. He also has a few problems with motor skills and balance.

Robert had some previous training in building maintenance. He had attended school at Pine Ridge Job Corps and obtained a degree in that field. He really enjoyed it and wanted to pursue a job in maintenance.

After doing some hard work with Anissa, Robert was hired to perform some maintenance and janitorial duties. Although he enjoyed it, the job didn’t offer him the number of hours he needed.

The distance from his home to his workplace was an issue as well. “I was looking for something that was closer to home,” he said. He decided to move on.

“He (Robert) was very persistent... He really wanted to work.”
– Ruth Capp



Robert Fargher

Anissa helped Robert to learn some new skills in interviewing and filling out applications. She put Robert in touch with ENCOR Services who provided a job coach for him when he needed it.

ENCOR serves the clients of Voc Rehab and Developmental Disability Services. They provide a number of employment services, among them job coaching. They also provide Supported Employment services; this includes assisting consumers with finding jobs, learning responsibilities, and retaining employment. ENCOR’s day activity workshops allow individuals to work in a sheltered setting. Finally, their Workstations in Industry program provide sheltered positions but still allows for the consumer to work in the community.

Robert and Anissa continued to work together and actively look for jobs. He had seen a new Wal-Mart going up

and knew that was where he wanted to work. Robert applied for the job and was hired to do building maintenance. He is proud to have obtained the job on his own and is doing well.

Robert and his mother both have a very good feeling about this job. “...I enjoy it thoroughly,” he remarked. His mother Ruth remembered, “Everything worked.” She was extremely proud of him, saying, “He was very persistent...He really wanted to work.”

Robert has been at Wal-Mart since November of 2003. He has received a raise and continues to enjoy his position. “It’s only a mile from our home!” he said.

Anissa said great things about Robert and his family. “He was a wonderful client,” she said. “He had a lot of support from his mom.”

Robert has fantastic goals. “I’m trying to stay there as long as I can,” he said. He also wants to start building up his savings account. His sense of purpose and zeal are working for him in his new position. He is well on his way to meeting his job goals. □